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LARSON GIVES SUPPORT TO LATINO AND IMMIGRANT FAIRNESS ACT

WASHINGTON, D.C.-U.S. Congressman John B. Larson announced today that he will give his strong support to ensuring that the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act is included in the final Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary Appropriation bill. Larson recently co-signed a letter to President Clinton asking for his support in his upcoming negotiations with members of Congress on the budget.

"It is greatly important that fairness becomes a more integral part of our immigration policy," said Larson. "Unfortunately, as it is now, our policy is somewhat inconsistent and unfair and this legislation seeks to change that."

The act would establish legal parity between Central American and Caribbean refugees and update the registry date so that long-time residents that have been in the United States since 1986 will qualify to remain here permanently. The legislation would also allow those who are already in the U.S. and on the verge of gaining their immigration status, to remain in the country while the process is being completed.

"This act would stop the needless and painful separation of families by allowing those who are close to receiving their immigration status to remain in the country, which I view as compassionate as well as practical," said Larson. "It will also assist many groups who were unjustifiably excluded from the opportunity to apply for permanent residency by updating the "registry date," so that people who have been contributing to our communities and our economy can have that opportunity."

Fifty-five percent of Hispanics in America are native-born U.S. citizens, and 70 percent already have U.S. citizenship. However, a large number of Hispanics seek permanent residency status, and more have relatives in foreign countries that would like to be reunited. Larson said that he felt the current immigration policy does not apply fairly to all immigrant groups and needlessly separates families.

This issue is the number one priority of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and a number of other Hispanic organizations.

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